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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1484
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1563
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000520

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHARAHAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP;
PARIS FOR ZEYA; LONDON FOR TSOU

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TAGS: ECON KISL PREL SA SOCI

SUBJECT: JEDDAH JOURNAL 17: ISLAMIC FORUM MEETING CANCELED
BECAUSE OF LEBANON CRISIS; INVESTORS LOBBY TO POSTPONE BAN
ON SELLING LIVE POULTRY; TWO NEW MARINE PRESERVES FOR RED
SEA, NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES; ASTROLOGER PREDICTS BUSH
ASSASSINATION

REF: JEDDAH 267

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

MEETING CANCELED DUE TO LEBANON CRISIS

¶1. (C) On August 1, the Consulate General received a fax from the International Islamic Forum for Dialogue informing us that our request for a meeting could not be honored at this time, because all of their staff and resources were needed to cope with the crisis in Lebanon.

INVESTORS LOBBY GOVERNMENT TO POSTPONE BAN ON SELLING LIVE POULTRY

¶2. (U) Nearly three years ago, the Saudi government ordered a ban on shops selling live chickens as of August 10, 2006. This was done as a health and safety measure to prevent the transmission of Avian Flu and other diseases (reftel). Now, barely one week before the final date, a delegation of large investors in the poultry industry has asked the Ministry of Agriculture to postpone the ban. These investors claim that the capacity of processing facilities, located primarily in main towns, is only 40,000 to 60,000 birds per day, while the farms produce 100,000 to 120,000 birds per day. The delegation asked that the ban be delayed until more processing plants are constructed in rural areas near the chicken farms, claiming that unless the ban is postponed, the industry will suffer severe financial and job losses.

COMMENT: A three-year lead time should have permitted the industry to construct sufficient processing facilities to cope with the demand. This last-minute plea suggests that the wealthy owners would rather use their influence to evade the law, regardless of the consequences for public health.
END COMMENT.

NEW WILDLIFE COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCES TWO NEW MARINE RESERVES IN THE RED SEA

¶3. (U) This week, Prince Bandar ibn Saud, the new Secretary General of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) announced that the Kingdom was planning to establish 60 new protected areas to add to the 16 already maintained by the Kingdom. The new preserves would include two marine reserves in the northern Red Sea at

Al-Aqaba and Fatul Wajad. The NCWCD hopes to establish these reserves next year.

SAUDI ARABIA TO TRAIN ITS OWN GOLDSMITHS TO REPLACE OUSTED FOREIGNERS

¶ 14. (U) The chairman of the Gold and Jewelry Committee of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), Jameel Farsi, has announced that the JCCI is considering establishing a special college to train goldsmiths and jewelry designers. As part of its Saudization drive the Saudi government had recently decreed that 100% of gold smiths and jewelry designers would have to be Saudi citizens. This order caused a public outcry, because virtually all goldsmiths and jewelers are foreigners and there did not seem to be any prospect of Saudis developing the necessary skills to maintain this important industry. The chairman noted that Jeddah is a center of the jewelry industry being the home of more than 800 gold and jewelry shops and 200 workshops that manufacture gold and jewelry. This appears to be an effort by the authorities to overcome the dearth of trained Saudis in at least one industry.

SAUDI VOCATIONAL TRAINING INCLUDES THE CATWALK

¶ 15. (U) The General Organization of Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT) announced that its vocational training will include a course in modeling for Saudi women. The spokesmen for GOTEVOT announced that they had accepted 1,500 applications from women in Jeddah for the course, which is still under development. In addition to modeling, the curriculum will include sales skills and basic accounting. Public reaction to the announcement was mixed. Some

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supporters contended that it was merely permitting Saudi women to participate in events that have been held behind closed doors in the Kingdom for decades. Others saw no objection as long as the models conducted themselves in accordance with Islamic standards and the events were women-only. One opponent opined that it was degrading for women to earn a living with their looks and another dismissed modeling as "a chance for ladies who love to dress up all the time to take it as a summer job."

TOURISM PROMOTES JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTHS

¶ 16. (U) A short report in the Arab News said that the Asir tourist festival is certain to be a great success this year. The report noted that the festival offers a good opportunity for young people to work. Teenagers and youngsters can make money selling food, drink, toys and souvenirs to the tourists. Vendors, it was asserted, can earn a good deal of money working the festival. One 17-year old interviewed by the reporter stated that he made over SR200 (c.US\$54.) per day and hoped to use his earnings to start an auto body shop.

ASTROLOGER PREDICTS THAT PRESIDENT BUSH WILL BE ASSASSINATED

¶ 17. (U) During mid July, the Islamic extremist Al Sahat website, known for its virulent anti-Americanism, carried a prediction by a Tunisian astrologer that President Bush would be assassinated this year. One respondent added that the astrologer had accurately predicted the death of King Fahad and the Pope last year. Several visitors left prayers "Dua'a" for the predicted event to occur. Within ten days, the site had recorded more than 24,000 hits. (Note: This website welcomed the arrival of the present CG with a number of death threats. End Note.)

Gfoeller